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THE MACRA TERROR

...Prolific Telefantasy Writer Ian Stuart Black Interviewed

THE MACRA TERROR by Ian Stuart Black

INTRODUCTION: 'The Macra Terror' is recalled, by all who saw it, as one of the true 'Doctor Who' spine-chillers. However the lack of visual evidence required to back up this rare accolade has tended to relegate it to the backwaters of the 'Who mythos, until now. Again with the aid of John Cura's priceless work, we are able to capture at least a flavour of what this story must have been like to view twenty-four years ago. The photographs reproduced

The 'telesnaps' reproduced here hail from the second episode and amount to about a half of the total number that Cura probably took from this episode. Naturally we would be most interested to hear from anyone who knows the whereabouts of the rest or, indeed, any telesnaps from any missing episode. (With thanks to John Davies, director of 'The Macra Terror').

Episode 1 broadcast 11th March 1967;
audience:8.0m, position:37, appreciation:50,
Episode 2 broadcast 18th March 1967;
audience:7.9m, position:42, appreciation:48,
Episode 3 broadcast 25th March 1967;
audience:8.5m, position:45, appreciation:52,
Episode 4 broadcast 1st April 1967,
audience:8.4m, position:39, appreciation:49.

SYNOPSIS OF EPISODE ONE

The Doctor, Ben, Polly and new companion Jamie have arrived on an Earth colony far in the future which is run with a holiday camp atmosphere complete with musical jingles exhorting the colonists to work hard and have fun. All appears to be well, with the colony's population in a state of almost nauseating contentment. Welcomed by the colony Pilot and the mysterious, unseen Controller, the Doctor's companions plunge themselves into the fray of goodwill, but the Doctor senses that all is not as it seems...

A man called Medok has claimed that hideous creatures roam the colony at night - claims dismissed as delusions by the Pilot and his men. Intrigued by the stories, the Doctor breaks curfew to talk to Medok, who is being hunted down as a dangerous fugitive by Ola and his policemen. As Medok and the Doctor talk, one of the creatures described - a Macra - lumbers towards them out of the darkness...

EPISODE TWO

Medok cries out a warning to the Doctor who peers into the darkness, searching for what he assumes to be one of the creatures Medok described, but can't see it. Medok insists that the creature is in the moonlight and the Doctor peers again, this time deciphering a hideous, crablike beast. Medok is relieved that he has been vindicated but the Doctor cautions the excited figure to keep both himself and his voice down as the sound of guards approach.

It is too late, however, as they are found by Ola and his policemen. Medok immediately gets up and surrenders, urging them to down their guns. Ola demands to know who Medok's companion is and is furious on hearing that it is the Doctor

and demands to know what he is doing in the area. Medok tries to reason that they have seen the Macra, but Ola isn't interested, nor in the Doctor's appeal which also falls on deaf ears since he is a stranger and strangers have no right to an opinion. Ola considers what to do. Both Medok and the Doctor have broken curfew and the latter is guilty of the even greater crime of assisting an escaped criminal. Both will be brought before the Pilot.

In his office the Pilot is dictating the new shift-working patterns relating to the tapping and utilisation of gas. A machine on his desk signals an emergency call and an electronic voice informs him of the Doctor and Medok's capture. Taken aback, the Pilot orders that the Doctor be brought in. Feigning unconcern at his predicament, the Doctor admires the Pilot's office, but the Pilot is unimpressed by such a show of disingenuousness and accuses the Doctor of committing a serious crime while denouncing Medok as a dangerous man who suffers from hallucinations, an assumption which the Doctor questions but is interrupted as the Pilot's communications terminal bleeps into life again. It is Ola, declaring that he has a statement from Medok that casts new light on the situation. Both are brought in.

Medok declares that the Doctor was not helping him but trying to persuade him to give himself up. The Pilot is initially unconvinced, and neither is the Doctor entirely sure what he is up to, but Medok continues, accusing Ola of not giving the Doctor a chance to explain himself. The Pilot apologises to the Doctor for the misunderstanding and Medok is taken away. The Doctor asks what will happen to him, and learns that he is being taken to the hospital for a course of corrective treatment which, as the Pilot coldly explains, will return him "a changed man, co-operative and obedient, fully in accordance with the ideals of our colony's founders."

After the Doctor has been directed back to his quarters, the screen in the Pilot's office glows with a picture of the Controller, which directs that the Doctor and his companions are to be conditioned at once to think like members of the colony. Dissent cannot be tolerated. The Pilot issues the instructions, then the Controller continues: "No-one in the colony must believe in Macra. There is no such thing as Macra. Macra do not exist! **There are no Macra! THERE ARE NO MACRA!!"**

Later that night Ben, Polly and Jamie are sleeping in cubicles. A soft voice fills their dreams: "The sleeper must relax and believe. You must accept it without question. You must obey orders. The leaders of the colony know what is best. In the morning you will be given work. You will be glad to do it. You will question nothing in the colony..."

Jamie wakes up suddenly and rouses Ben, who is not aware of having heard the voice, yet seems to be showing signs of the conditioning. He urges Jamie to get some sleep ready for the long day ahead of them. The young Scot questions his meaning, and Ben explains that they must do something to help in exchange for the food which the colony has provided for them. Ben closes his eyes and continues to sleep.

In her nearby chalet Polly is sleeping, the soft voice penetrating her conscience. The Doctor is in her cubicle examining the

items around her bed, but all he can hear is a faint humming sound - enough to tell him what is going on. Noticing a small, suspicious-looking hole just above Polly's pillow, the Doctor pokes a button-hook into it and pulls, revealing a thin strand of wire which had evidently been attached to a concealed recording unit. This action results in a puff of smoke which wakens his young companion. The Doctor tells her to forget everything she has been dreaming. Suddenly, remembering his other companions, he rushes to their bunks to cut off the conditioning voice, but he is too late. Ben is clearly under the influence and tries to stop the Doctor's actions by advising Jamie and Polly that he is wrong to interfere this time: "Control knows what's best for us. We should co-operate, we should be helping. I'm going to turn him in." Ben rushes from the room and returns soon after, flanked by Ola and his guards. This time Ola has all the evidence he needs, and he marches the Doctor and Jamie from the room.

In the hospital Medok is being treated, watched over by the Pilot. The conditioning voice is playing but Medok resists. The Pilot declares that he is beyond help and must spend the rest of his days working in the pits. Medok tells the Pilot that nothing will hide the truth, but before he can reply the Pilot receives another call about the Doctor and hurries away.

Polly has gone in search of the Doctor but has found herself in the building site where he was earlier captured. She is being pursued by Ben who is still under conditioning. Eventually he catches up with her and urges her to return to the colony and to conform, but as he grabs her Macra advance on them. Polly screams, but Ben can see nothing. Polly is hysterical: "It was horrible, it had claws - like we saw on the time scanner" (ref: **The Moonbase** episode four). Ben dismisses her claim as though he were reciting from a creed. As he speaks, Polly is attacked by a Macra claw, and at last Ben can see. He grabs a piece of wood and hits out wildly at the monster. Weakened, it scuttles away, but more emerge. Polly and Ben, apparently himself once more, flee back to the colony.

Once again the Doctor is receiving a stern talking-to from the Pilot. As they talk, the Doctor observes that the Pilot, like everyone else, is under subconscious control and, as he did in his companions' sleeping quarters, shorts out the conditioning mechanism. The Pilot is furious and threatens to seriously punish him for his interference.

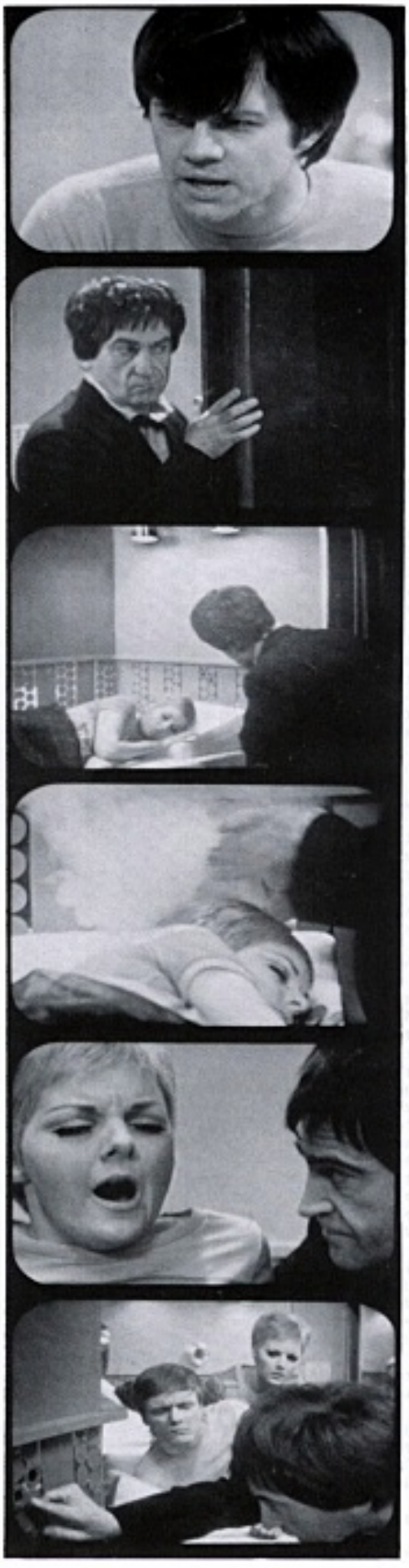
Just then Ola bursts in with Ben and Polly, advising that the former has an urgent report. Jamie, bitter at Ben's earlier betrayal, remarks that it must be to stab somebody else in the back, but Polly springs to Ben's defence stating he risked his life to save her. Annoyed by this persistent talk of monsters, the Pilot demands of Ben whether the tale is true, but the sailor is uncertain as his conditioning is apparently returning: "She ran away. I went after her."

"Were there such creatures?", enquires the Pilot.

"No. There were no such creatures."

Polly is aghast as Ben continues: "There are no such things as Macra. Macra do not exist."

The Doctor explains to his other companions that Ben is clearly under the control of evil forces that dominate the colony. The Pilot is outraged, denouncing



his claim as a lie and insists that Control always acts in the colony's best interests. The Doctor demands to know why, then, doesn't the Controller show himself. Pointing at the face on the screen, the Pilot insists that they **have** seen the Controller, but Jamie is equally scathing and challenges him with the fact that all they have ever seen on the screen is a picture of a man and a recorded voice. The Pilot raises his voice to address the screen: "The strangers wish to see you in person, Controller."

The image of the 'Controller' begins to lose focus and flickers and fades, and a new image appears. It is clearly the same man as before but notably older and weaker in appearance. He appears less assured, even dazed. A voice is heard, but the Controller's lips do not move: "This is your Controller."

Jamie demands to know why he does not speak for himself. At last, the man on the screen is seen to address them direct, but he is hesitant: "I? Am I to speak?"

The familiar Control voice instructs that they must be told to obey, and the man stammers: "I will tell them. I will do as you wish. Keep back...do not touch me...".

It is apparent to those in the Pilot's office that the Controller is speaking in response to something that they cannot see, and as they watch a great, crab-like claw whips into the picture and drags the obviously terrified 'Controller' from view.

Polly screams that it is the Macra but is shouted down by the Pilot's orders for them to be removed and condemned to the pits. Again Polly screams: "The Macra are in control! They run the colony. They run your **lives**!"

SYNOPSIS OF EPISODES THREE AND FOUR

Thanks to their conditioning, neither Ben nor the Pilot see the Macra. Jamie and Polly are sent to work in the gas mines while the Doctor, owing to his age, is consigned to work in the pump room. While there, he interferes with the system, lethally altering the formula of the gas which temporarily affects the Macra who are reliant on the poisonous gas produced from pockets within the mine (the Macra are parasites, literally living off the work of the colonists).

Medok and Jamie lead an escape bid but find themselves in a tunnel full of Macra. The Doctor assists them from the pump room by flooding the tunnel with fresh air, stunning the Macra, but not before Medok is caught and eaten alive. The mines are surrounded, but Polly and the Doctor escape. Jamie is captured by Ola and Ben, who is slowly breaking his conditioning and taken to the Pilot, whose conditioning is also fading thanks to the Doctor's earlier interference.

Meanwhile Polly and the Doctor reach the heart of the colony and find that Control is, in fact, a disgusting giant white Macra. They return to the Pilot who is deposed by Ola on the orders of Control after the Doctor reveals the true nature of the colony's rulers. They are locked up in the Pilot's office with gas seeping in threatening to subdue their willpower.

A recovered Ben, under the guidance of the imprisoned Doctor, returns to the pump room and destroys all the gas pumps, thereby killing off the Macra.

The colony is freed and, in gratitude, it is announced that a Dance Festival will be held every year in honour of 'The Strangers'.

Complied by Peter Linford and Gary Leigh

EPISODE TWO CAST

Doctor Who	Patrick Troughton
Ben	Michael Craze
Polly	Anneke Wills
Jamie	Frazer Hines
Pilot	Peter Jeffrey
Medok	Terence Lodge
Ola	Gertan Klauber
Controller	Graham Leaman
Control Voice	Denis Goacher
Macra Operator	Robert Jewell

CREW

Production Assistant	Chris D'Oyly-John
Assistant Floor Manager	Ann Faggetter
Lighting	Frank Cresswell, Terry Wild
Sound	Hugh Barker, Gordon Mackie
Costume Supervisor	Daphne Dare
Make-up Supervisor	Gillian James
Music	Dudley Simpson
Story Editor	Gerry Davis
Designer	Kenneth Sharp
Producer	Innes Lloyd
Director	John Davies

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

IN WRITING his storyline and scripts for this show Ian Stuart Black had the Macra in mind as being a race of insect-men. This notion was radically changed by the production crew who felt insect-men might be too comparable with the aliens seen in 'The Web Planet' (Serial "N"). Thus, the creatures were changed to large crabs though, in the script, they were still referred to as insects.

THE MACRA TERROR was a great success, aiding and abetting the ratings recovery staged with 'The Moonbase' (Serial "M"). It did, though, draw a lot of critical letters, mainly from concerned parents who saw in the programme a level of physical and psychological horror not previously ladelled out in the series in such quantities.

ALTHOUGH IN TRUTH only one full-size Macra was ever built, it was a memorable example of good visual effects. The creature stood about nine-feet from ground level to the tips of its antennae. So bulky was it that for scenes requiring physical visible movement (all of which were done on film), the prop had to be mounted on the back of a lorry cab chassis which was then driven, slowly, in reverse. A powerful set of interior lights gave a white, luminous glow to the Macra's cranium, which was bright when the creature was active and dull whenever it was dormant. Macra operator Robert Jewell was kept very busy standing inside the wooden framework (see interview, ref:WHM44/A5). A set of levers controlled the movement of the antennae and the attack claws, while the mandible claws were hollow, enabling him to slide his hands inside to work them like gloves. The mouth was rubberised with tubes embedded inside it that fed back, out of camera, to where the effects technicians could hand-pump a coloured mixture of foam, wallpaper paste and wood chippings which emerged as the Macra's slime. By hauling on some interior handles Robert Jewell could also give the monster some limited body movements.

ANOTHER ASPECT of the show which contributed to its horrific appeal was its setting. Aside from early daytime scenes in the first episode almost all the action took place at night using low-key lighting.

THE NOCTURNAL SETTING also aided the studio handling of the Macra's scenes. As mentioned above a lorry cab provided the creature with motion on film, but this could not be used in the studio where noise levels are critical. Instead, a wide variety of tricks was employed to suggest not only one moving Macra, but several of them.

ONE TECHNIQUE was the careful positioning of a gimballed mirror. This enabled the static Macra to be "seen" from different sets (e.g. beyond the window of a semi-constructed building). Also, by the mirror on its gimbals and by having the camera zooming into the image the creature could be seen shuffling forwards.

PARTS OF THE MACRA PROP could also be detached, such as the attack claws which could be independently handled by an operator. In such a way the attack on Polly in episode two was achieved. For example, a claw coming through the side of a building and grabbing the girl was followed by a close-up of the Macra prop on its stage.

BACK-PROJECTION of filmed Macra footage also enable them to be seen on cue in several sets, such as the colony exterior.

MOST COMPLEX of all to do was the attack on Jamie by two Macra at the end of episode three/beginning of episode four. Editing of videotape was much easier to do now than it had been in 1963, and so much of this scene was shot out of sequence with Jamie fighting first the Macra left of camera, then the repositioned Macra right of camera. By stringent editing this scene was later blended as a montage, complete with telecine footage, of

Jamie huddling in a tunnel vent as the Macra bring down part of the mine roof on top of him.

A MAJOR REQUIREMENT of this story was the use of smoke guns and "Burco" boilers to generate steam, smoke and dry-ice effects for the gas craved by the Macra. The storyline called for the gas to be seen seeping out of the ground at night, and thus a layer of dry-ice covered both the film and studio exterior sets most of the time. This was an aid to the filmed footage of moving Macra, as it hid the fact that the Macra had no obvious walking limbs, only a rubberised skirt. Steam vents were also let into sets which were to be flooded with gas (e.g. the mine tunnels). To disperse the gas controllably these shots were done on film and then rolled in reverse to suggest the air clearing. For the studio sets, in episode four, from which gas had to be dispersed quickly, a wind machine was provided.

ANOTHER ASPECT of the underlying horror of this story was Kenneth Sharp's sets for the colony interior. His idea was to present it as a holiday camp gone mad - a 'Butlins' in space, masking horror beneath the apparent gaiety. To this end all sets suggested a holiday camp, even down to the rest cubicles which appeared as a row of chalets complete with inverted V-shaped roofs. The costumes also complimented this idea, appearing on screen as a cross between Redcoat uniforms and the type of Puritarian military uniforms seen on chocolate box lids.

BACK PROJECTION was used for all the Control, Propaganda and announcement broadcasts. Both the colony interior and the Pilot's office sets were fitted with 7' x 5' back-projection screens, onto which either moving telecine or still caption slides could be projected on cue. A photograph of a "handsome" Graham Leaman came up every time a Control broadcast was made. Moving back-projection was employed for the conclusion of episode two as the real Controller is seen and dragged away by the Macra claw.

RICHARD BERLE's Broadcast and Propaganda announcements and Deni Gracher's Americanised Control voice were all pre-recorded a month before the first episode went into the studio. Not only did this help the design and timings of these broadcasts, it also enabled the complex Radiophonic and musical arrangements to be worked out.

DUDLEY SIMPSON and the staff of the Radiophonic Workshop (led by Brian Hodgson) worked out the longest and most complex Radiophonic score yet seen in the series. All the colony scenes had a subliminal set of tones running through them, suggesting everything from a concentrated work environment to "sleep-time". As examples of Radiophonic score totals, during the first episode the score ran to 11 minutes 51 seconds, and in the second it amounted to 18 minutes 26 seconds.

ABOVE THIS were all the jingles - the happy rhymes and songs exhorting the workers to ever greater efforts for the good of the colony. These were composed by Dudley Simpson, arranged by Wilfred Johns and recorded at the Radiophonic Workshop by three unnamed female singers. Simpson and Johns also composed and arranged the main theme and tunes for the colony celebrations, which needed a three-piece band for the longest track heard at the beginning of episode one and the end of episode four.

PLAYING SOLO on an electric organ, Simpson devised the monophobic Macra theme - a reedy-sounding piece which heralded either an appearance of a Macra (episode one) or a Macra attack (episode three).

THE MACRA TERROR saw the introduction of a new title sequence and re-arranged theme tune. The Radiophonic Workshop restructured Ron Grainer's original score synching it in with the new titles, designed solely this time by Bernard Lodge.

ADDED AS A TELECINE INSERT to episode four's recording on March 26th 1967 was a thirty-second trailer for 'The Faceless Ones' (Serial "KK"). This trailer comprised a montage of Gatwick location footage featuring the Doctor, Jamie, Ben and Polly.

(C) JEREMY BENTHAM & CMS

*N.M.ALLEN published Ian Stuart Black's novelisation of 'The Macra Terror' in 1987.

*OUR LIST of Ian Stuart Black's major tele-fantasy credits last issue neglected to include his important contribution to the second season of 'Adam Adamant Lives!', which were two episodes titled 'The Bacardi Affair' (transmitted 21/1/67) and 'Another Little Drink' (transmitted 11/2/67).

IAN STUART BLACK

DWB: How did your interest in writing begin?

IAN STUART BLACK: When I was seven I used to write little stories and sell them for a ha'penny which combined my two interests - writing and selling. If you could write you ought to sell it!

Writers often say that there's a passion within them which dictates that they shall become writers...

I think that mine was more overwhelming than a passion, I just never thought of anything else! I used to tell stories to my brothers and cousins - it was just natural. I had opportunities to be other things later on, like to become a producer and a few chances to be a director, and I never wanted to because I thought it would be a waste of time. It's bad enough being a script editor because that takes up time you could've spent writing your own stuff! It was as simple as that, just no choice.

Did your interest stem from having grown up with books or cinema?

Cinema, yes. My father was what was called in those days an actor/manager. He had his own theatre company in the United States before the First World War which my mother was in. It was a traditional thing. My elder brother was born over there and was around for a bit in the dressing room as a baby but I was born in this country after my father came back and fought in the First World War. He went back into the theatre afterwards but decided it had all changed so he came back, but while we were brought up all the time it was Shakespeare or drama and so on that was talked at the table. Looking at it, psychologically, I decided I wasn't going to be an actor, I was going to write the words for the actors (i.e. my mother and father). It's very Freudian that, isn't it!

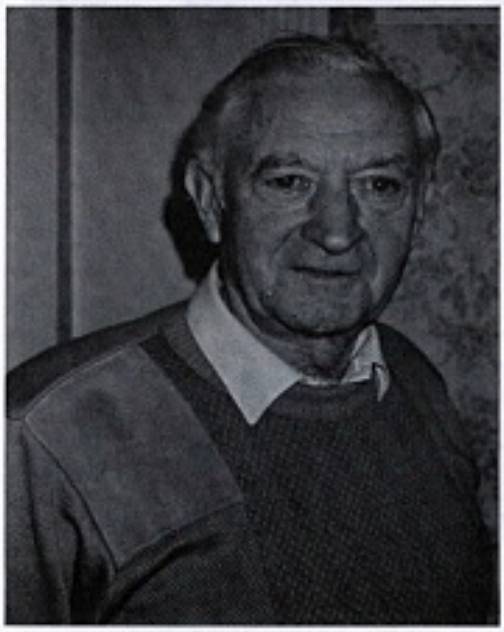
What particular books and films did you enjoy then?

In the thirties I used to go once a week to the cinema and I loved all films; westerns, thrillers, the lot. The entire range from light comedy through thrillers, the Hitchcocks (Blackmail I remember seeing), the Marx Brothers, the Broadway stories, the Bing Crosby stories, everything. Films were magic.

People who have reviewed your work tend to say you have a lot of the Hitchcock script-writer in you, in everything from 'Dangerman' right through 'Doctor Who' and up to 'Star Maidens'...

Don't blame me for **Star Maidens**! I did my utmost to rescue that, for non-professional reasons (for family reasons), and because I'm very fond of Eric Paice. They'd got themselves into a terrible jam - they'd started off with a premise that just didn't work. You see, Eric had worked for me before and this was his idea and I said 'Okay, I'll do it for the money', but **Star Maidens** didn't give me any pleasure - it was too nebulous and unthought out. They called for me because Eric was under strain. He'd worked on a series in Australia while I was setting up Elephant Boy there so we'd known each other for years. I was the honourary secretary of the Screen-writers' Guild (before the Writers' Guild) and Eric was a member. He and Mac Hulke, his partner, came along to see me once when we were doing the **Dangerman**

DWB SPEAKS TO THIS ASTOUNDINGLY PROLIFIC TELEFANTASY WRITER ABOUT HIS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL CAREER...



series and I met them and liked them. I thought that they had promise but couldn't get them past the producer of the time. They were just starting roughly the same time as Dennis Spooner and Richard Harris. Writers in those days seemed to go around in pairs so that they could comfort one another when they were getting no work!

When did you start writing for television?

On my demob leave I joined the Rank Organisation. My wife had shown them a play while I was still in Egypt and they said 'Get you husband to get in touch with us when he gets back' which I did. I was very lucky. I worked for three years in the scenario department there writing things, which of ocurse they never did because they used to go out and buy books by famous writers or do Dickens or something, but I learnt a lot. I was just starting to make a name in the industry as competent when television comes along and I thought 'Oh God, here we go again!' But as it tunred out television was absolutely ideal for me because in those days programmes were made in half-hour segments. The first thing I did was a series called Inspector Fabian Of Scotland Yard. A group had bought the rights to this book of Fabian's (he was a real man, in fact I was told later on that he was looking on me as the man who ruined his life because of all the things I made up - I didn't stick to the book at all!). I did about eight or nine of these half-hours which I was very lucky to do.

Was it difficult to adapt to television initially?

To begin with yes, because you can't just follow your inspiration when you're doing the professional, formal, rigorous shape of television. You've got to learn how to concentrate what you want to say (your story), make it lively, make it different and stick to the formula.

Dennis Spooner described writing with the leter 'W' which he claimed was the great secret of writing for television where you'd have high dramatic bits and then the dialogue-y bits and then the next action bit and so on.

I never used any formula like that. I just used to learn the pattern and then try and shape it to whatever it was that I wanted to say. And try to enjoy it of course, because if you don't enjoy it, no-one else will.

Was it a conscious decision to specialise on series rather than one-off plays?

Yes, because if you do a series you used to do eight or nine episodes of them. Do a one-off, yes, that's very prestigious, but when you're bringing up a family it's better to do the eight than the one. When I was doing one series they used to be preparing the next, particularly when it

was Lew Grade's outfit, because you'd be finishing series, rewriting scripts or getting writers to rewrite scripts, things like that, and you'd be preparing the next series. So from about '58 to '64 it was absolutely concentrated, and at times you felt like a sponge being wrung dry and then they'd ask more of you. Ugh!

So how long did it used to take you to do a half-hour of 'The Invisible Man' or something like that?

Oh, a couple of weeks. I joined the series in the summer of 1958. I actually went along to the studio at Elstree to do an episode for a series called William Tell which was being made at the same studios and when I got there, instead of doing William Tell, the same company who were doing **The Invisible Man** were in a flat spin - this was a Tuesday and they had nothing to go on for the following Monday. They had been having production troubles because they had an English producer and an American producer who were quarrelling like hell trying to get power over one another and they were having difficulties with their American partners. So they said to me 'Could you forget William Tell and do a script on **The Invisble Man** because it's got to go to casting, it's got to go to the directors, it's got to be typed, re-typed, edited, sets built...' and they took me to a little back room in the old National studios with no window, just a sky light, and I had to write this script in three or four days. It was coming up to Christmas and in those next five weeks I wrote four scripts, the producer himself wrote one and we got a break at Christmas, but when you had to I would do one a week as opposed to one a fortnight which was more normal and which I was much happier with!

The second series of 'The Invisible Man' saw the phasing out of his sister and niece (played by Debrorah Watling) and moved on to more espionage type of adventure. Was this a conscious move?

It was more my kind of story and I was then writing most of them at that point. They were the sort of adventure stories in which you could use the Invisible Man's ridiculous ability to go totally transparent whenever he wanted to and they fitted in very well. I found with the series that I simply wanted more excitement out of it and that meant using the Invisible Man more as an invisible man. It wasn't necessarily to get rid of the other characters, it was just that they didn't fit in with the stories quite so well.

Some of your storylines for 'The Invisible Man' appeared to have been revised for the first season of 'Danger Man'. Were there any reasons for this?

After I left **Danger Man** the company probably went back and thought 'What ideas can we revamp' and went back to their old series to have a look at them, but this wasn't consciously done while I was there.

How did you used to time your scripts?

I would act the scenes quietly to myself and visualise the drama. You got a feeling of when you're up to the quarter of an hour and there's a minute's break for commercials. It became almost a second nature.

On 'The Invisible Man' didn't you end up with the title of 'Story Associate'?

That was the first time I was ever a story editor, which really meant I had to write as much as I could as well as managing other people. In fact I worked out on my contract a weekly payment plus extra for my scripts, so they didn't get the scripts in the weekly payment but at the same time I couldn't possible (nor did I want to) write them all. That would have been ludicrous. I knew my work would suffer under this pressure so I got people in like Ken Taylor, who I'd worked with previously and like as a writer, but Ken had a mind really above that level of material. He was very conscious of pacifism and social issues and I appreciate that, so instead he recommended me to someone who was working for the Danzigers' company - Brian Clemens. So I got hold of Brian and he became my assistant more or less; he'd be in the next room and he'd come through and tell me a story. We used to have all these wonderful discussions and work through scripts together.

What was your brief on undertaking writing for 'The Invisible Man'?

Lew (Grade) never said anything to me, but apparently the producer had intended it to be a comedy series. Now, I felt the potential for excitement was too good. I remember writing a story about a Polish sailor who jumped boat in London and of course the Communists were after him and the Invisible Man was helping him (in fact a Russian paper called Crocodile, which is their Punch, commented on this episode which I felt was putting our little series at a very high level!) - something as simple as that! I like tension, even in comedy I'll try to bring tension in, and Lew had wanted it to be light frothy comedy. As I said previously after I'd joined **The Invisible Man** it became more and more at my level of what I wanted to do in popular television entertainment, and this is what led to **Danger Man** as a premise, which was mine.

'Danger Man' must have been a very difficult concept to sell - 'We're not going to say anything about this character,

except he's there'...

Well, I didn't actually tell them that. What I did was write about four pilot scripts. I remember Pat McGoohan being absolutely furious about one of them, absolutely furious, because I had him lying on a bed with a girl. They were simply lying on a bed in order to open a safe which was behind the bed, nothing more, but Pat was white-faced with anger at a meal we all had together because of this apparently dishonest sexual implication because he was very puritanical.

Didn't he refuse to have anything to do with sex in either 'Danger Man' or 'The Prisoner'?

Yes, but that was very good because that fitted in with the character. Everything was supressed in a sense. Pat was an explosive time-bomb, you were always waiting for him to go off, and that fitted in extremely well with the concept.

Did you design these pilots with McGoohan specifically in mind?

Oh yes! I went to see Pat in Bram by Ibsen at the Hammersmith Theatre and his performance was excellent. Of course it's a classical and religious play, but the **power** of the man came through, and after that I thought that this concept of being a

single driving power, not talking to people but all contained within himself, would be ideal for him.

So it was written totally with McGoohan in mind?

Yes, oh yes.

At the time was there any concept of what nationality he was going to be? In the early ones it seemed to be slightly more of the New England accent.

Well, that's Pat's strange accent; it's really Northern Ireland. In fact it's not even Northern Ireland, it's something of his own - sorts of catches in the back of your throat. He still does it - I noticed him on Columbo recently and he's got the same quality in his voice. Good actor, typical actor!

What was your working relationship with him like?

Very good. I liked Pat and got on with him very well. He was a very good actor and I admired him professionally. He had certain things he didn't want to do and I respected that. He wanted very much for the **Danger Man** character to be something he could believe in. He didn't want to be an assassin at any point. He didn't want to kill people unnecessarily and of course this made a complication to the story, and wherever you've got complications and you have to surmount them you come out with a better story. So I went along with that very happily.

Was it your decision not to be involved with 'The Prisoner' or were you simply never asked?

The Prisoner was totally different. It was an idea of Pat's that he'd had for a long time and which he'd discussed, I think, with some friends of his and I'd left by that time. I know that Pat used to chat at the bar occasionally about "an idea" and it must have been **The Prisoner**, but I'd gone off and was doing something quite different.

By this time, of course, most of your work was on commercial television. How did the BBC start creeping in to your career?

Well, don't forget Fabian Of Scotland Yard had been bought by the BBC after these Americans made it. It was the first filmed television series of so-called "adult" material that was shown on the BBC so they knew me and I knew them. We were on sort of friendly terms, although I was very happy to work for commercial television because I liked the sort of drive and the professional qualities. There was an element in the BBC, I felt, of forgiving your fellows if you're all from the same school whereas I always felt it's the final product that's important. Americans used to keep coming across in those days and they knew about me and they'd contact me and say 'Look, can you do an episode of this...'. One was a sort of ghostly story and I did a half-hour for them and the BBC saw it, liked it, and said 'Would you do a thriller-type serial?' Alan Bromley was a good producer who I thought I'd like to work with, so I wrote this original six-part serial called Ransom For A Pretty Girl, and when I was at the BBC writing it, on the door running through to the next office was written **'Doctor Who'**. I asked Alan if they really were the **Doctor Who** people and he said yes and I said 'I'd like to meet them'.

You were obviously aware of 'Doctor Who' at that time.

Oh yes, for the simple reason that my children used to watch it all the time! And people from across the road - whose parents wouldn't let them them see it - used to come into our house and watch it. So I said 'I'd like to do a **Doctor Who**', and they couldn't believe it. They said 'Why?' and I said 'My kids don't think I'm a writer because I've never done **Doctor Who**!', so they asked me for an idea and I told them the idea of **The Savages** - or The White Savages as it was in those days.

Don't you cite 'The Savages' as your favourite of your three 'Who stories?

Yes, partly I think because I like the idea of this wonderful civilisation with some of the most artistic and valuable things of mankind and, at the same time, in the shadows, it was based on the dark side of man's personality which they were exploiting and it took the morality and advice-type of approach of the Doctor to say that, in spite of all the good it's based on, it had something so evil that he was going to destroy it. It had, in a sort of superficial way, a philosophic idea, and I liked a story that's not just blood and guts and chasing about but something where you're working out something. That's the reason why I probably liked it most of all, although I realise that as a **Doctor Who** it lacked a great monster or a lot of the things that the series had, but at the same time I thought that it was something quite worthwhile trying.

Didn't you find 'Doctor Who' a different kind of discipline: instead of the taut half-hours or fifty minutes you were used to, here you were looking at constructing a story in four parts that in total would be ninety minutes long?

That was no problem because when you do a film - and I'd done films before - they're ninety minutes or one hundred minutes. And I'd written a couple of books (thrillers) of 80,000 words in length. You can easily slip from comedy to tragedy to love story etc.; you adjust something in your solar plexus and you adjust in your mind for tempo and time. That is second nature and experience.

But at the same time 'Doctor Who' had been going for some time. Is it difficult to take up the reins of what someone else has created and pick up on characters and their mannerisms?

No, no because I'd been watching Bill Hartnell with my kids. I respected Bill Hartnell, who I thought was a very good actor, so it was no problem at all just to slip in.

Did you ever get to meet him?

A couple of times. I liked him, but again he could be very irritable. Don't forget, **Doctor Who** picked up a lot of young and inexperienced actors and actresses and they could be a bit unprofessional, and Bill Hartnell was very professional and could get mildly irritated if they didn't know their lines properly. I could understand that, but he was a charming bloke as far as I was concerned.

He was nearing the end of his time on the series when you first worked on the show and there was some concern about his health at this time.

Well, he wasn't all that old you know, only late 50s, but I thought he was older. I didn't know he was ill though. When they spoke to me about the stories I just assumed that that was the way he was acting.

Were you aware of any question mark hanging over the series' future because of his ill health?

No, that's not the sort of thing the BBC would discuss with the writer, probably in case the writer said 'Right, I don't want to do it and be responsible for this bloke getting any worse'.

Did you go to the office with your own ideas or did they ask you to write around their own framework?

No, I only do my own, but what I had to do with **The War Machines** was to incorporate the Post Office Tower which had just been finished building because they thought that would be topical and interesting to the world. So I thought I could stick that in, and then they said 'Can it be about computers?' but that was no problem. It's like someone coming up to you and saying 'Can you do a story about a cowboy who's lame in his left foot?'. Of course you can.

'The War Machines' set a precedent as the first truly contemporary setting for a 'Doctor Who' adventure.

I hadn't realised that, but when I saw some of the adventures later on I realised that they must have used this in a sense. If you want to break new ground and it works then use it, if it doesn't then discard it, and presumably they thought it worked and decided to try it again, but I hadn't really given it all that much conscious thought at the time as regards the locale - I was just telling a story.

Did the War Machines themselves live up to your expectations?

Yes, I think they did quite well because they made things on a shoestring I found out later and yet they made a lot of these creatures and various other things they built work.

It's sad that apart from 'The War >

Machines' - which was only discovered completely intact a few years ago - all of your 'Doctor Who' episodes were junked by the BBC.

Without being too critical it struck me as crazy that if you've got people who are supposed to be up to their job and they are junking things or cutting them out simply for the sake of getting a tape again... **The War Machines** sells all over the place and I occasionally take cash in from the United States and that's what, 26 years later, and the BBC could be making sales from all that stuff, not just mine which they destroyed. Instead of wiping these tapes, if the BBC had sold them instead it would have been a bit more cash in their pockets but they didn't foresee the video market which is a pity. If I remember there was a hell of a job getting hold of **The War Machines** from one of the African countries.

Some writers comment that the difficulty with 'Doctor Who' is that you have to involve companions and treat them as realistic characters, which can be difficult when you're up against the dominating presence of the actor playing the Doctor.

I didn't notice that at all. When I started writing for the series they told me that they wanted two new characters, and as they were going to be picked up in the London of the 60s I knew what they'd have to be like. As far as I was concerned they (Ben and Polly) did not interfere on the stories at all.

Were Gerry Davis and Innes Lloyd a good team to work with?

Oh yes.

You worked with them on 'The Macra Terror' didn't you?

Yes. I wanted to tell a story at a certain level so it was an adventure story and exciting, along the lines of the Doctor using his wisdom and capacity and unworldliness while at the same time having another quality below it - like this wonderful culture based on great evil, the exploitation of man where they withdraw the life essence. I decided I wasn't going to tell a superficial, fast-moving, car chase type story, I would get bored. So there's a hidden something for me and very often that comes through without people putting their finger on it. They say 'That was very interesting' but they don't quite know why it was, but it's because of this second layer of significance.

'The Macra Terror' was one of the all-time horror stories. Were you specifically asked to do a script that edged into the blood-chilling end of the horror market?

Yes, I remember that it was chilling, but I simply dreamt that up on a similar sort of principle, namely telling a story at two different levels. They told me about Troughton and his character (he'd only just started); this light quality, this skittishness, this sort of 'pixie' quality, and so I thought I would play this against the very opposite - something so frightening, so appalling, like death, because these creatures lived on death. So really you were taking two total contrasts - Patrick Troughton playing his pipe and being an idiot and going into danger.

The director, John Davies, cleverly added to the suspense by keeping the Macra mainly in the shadows.

I think that the art of suggestion is a very good technique altogether. The moment that you come out completely in the open, the moment you state something, is not so nearly as frightening as a curtain moving slightly or something happening in the shadows. You don't show it, you let the audience create it in their own minds - their own second fear. If you come out in the open and are very blatant about something that's fine, and from then on the danger is clear in the audience's mind, but by doing it more slowly and suggestively, almost by implication, that's probably the best and more alarming way I feel and a very fundamental approach to fear.

Had you visualised the Macra in your mind because in your original scripts you specified them as "insect men"?

The original title was 'Doctor Who and the Insect Men' and then they changed into crabs and it became **The Macra Terror.** I don't quite know why. I think probably the BBC might have said 'Could you think of an alternative to insects?' As to their visualisation I believe in leaving it to the specialists and the Special Effects Department came up with the design for the creatures.

Were you ever present at the filming of

your stories?
If I was working on something else or seeing someone at the BBC at the time then I might have dropped in, but I would never interfere with directors because I believed that if you had a director who knew his job then you leave it to him. They didn't interfere with me with the scripts and I knew that they didn't mess about with my scripts much, if at all. I mean, in somebody like Chris (Barry) I had total confidence and he was very efficient in putting it on the screen as it was written.

Were you aware and concerned with all the dissent raised about 'The Macra Terror', particularly on David Coleman's programme Talkback where concerned mothers had claimed it had terrified their children into virtual comas?!
I wasn't even aware of that! I always believed in suggesting rather than showing, and if you've got the shadow or the movement behind the curtain, the audience will do the rest of the work for you. I'm sure it did terrify the children and frightened the adults too, if it didn't they wouldn't have thought I could do the job properly! I mean, what is this series if it doesn't involve that sort of tension? You've got to have fear and danger and overcome that fear and danger. If you read the traditional fairy tales, they are a true struggle through danger; through Pilgrim's Progress you come out the other end a hero. If you live through **The Macra Terror** and get through the other side you've grown.

There is a strong element in all three of your 'Doctor Who' scripts of people losing their humanity; of having their consciousness or even their essence ripped away from them...
The individual is terribly important to me. I know that any sort of attack on the individual distresses me, and as a youngster used to distress me very much, and I think that if I'm asked for villains I probably unwittingly use them as people who destroy individuals, the inadequate, those who can't help themselves (humanity trapped in a particular situation).

'The Macra Terror' was your last 'Doctor Who'. Were you asked to do any more after that?
There was one I wrote called 'Doctor Who and the Furies' for which I had written the basis of six episodes. I went off to the French West Indies to do a series with a French company and that took four or five months and when I came back I moved on to something else so I never got around to finishing it. As a working writer it used to be important to me to see something ahead and write on so I was reluctant to go back.

Which of your two Doctors did you prefer writing for?
As with Pat McGoohan they were very, very competent actors. What was essential with **Doctor Who** was to play it with absolute sincerity. The moment that you start codding it or being clever about it and acting as if you're just doing it for children then it's gone. It's got to be entirely sincerely approached. Admittedly it's fantasy and impossible but you must play it for real, and both these two actors took it seriously.

Would you ever consider writing for 'Doctor Who' again?
I'd love to, love to, if it was back to the quality of the sixties and the believability and significance of the sixties, not just a shallow pantomime.

Why do you think it hasn't been working in the last few years?
I didn't think that it sustained the impact. I thought that it got too skittish and imitated itself in a way and they were making important things out of peripheral things, like the length of a scarf of some other trick, and that's not it. You've got to go to the heart of the story and the heart of the story has got to mean something. It's got to be, as I said before, about an internal struggle, it can't just be superficial.

Did you become pigeon-holed as a fantasy/science fiction writer?
No. The next thing I did was The Man In Room Seventeen for Granada about these two men who used to solve everything from this room and never went out.

Didn't you help start off 'The Champions' with William Gaunt?
I worked on it. I only did one, for Dennis Spooner.

Are there any other series in the genre that we haven't covered in this interview?
Oh, masses of things. I haven't really spoken about 1971-76 when I did **Elephant Boy, Castaway, Tully,** and **The Outsiders** which we did with the Germans, French and Australians. I never worked on **The Avengers** and I was offered **The Saint** by Lew Grade and I stupidly turned it down. If I hadn't turned it down I'd have made a fortune! I just didn't like **The Saint.** I am being very arrogant now but I thought that the writing was cheap, meaningless and derivative and I didn't believe any of it.

What are you working on at the moment?
I have a supernatural book out in March published by Constable Books. I've also just finished a draft script for one of the television companies which is the first TV script I've done since I moved down to Devon away from the studios which is a very long time, but I suddenly had the feeling that I'd like to be involved in television again.

Even in today's more competitive climate?
Stories are still stories. Storytelling doesn't change. The technique changes slightly, the fashion changes slightly, but the pattern of the story doesn't change.

IAN STUART BLACK, THANK YOU

INTERVIEWED NOVEMBER 4th, 1990.
QUESTIONS BY JEREMY BENTHAM, BRUCE CAMPBELL, GARY LEIGH AND ANDREW PIXLEY.

IAN STUART BLACK CREDITS

TO ATTEMPT A DEFINITIVE LIST OF IAN'S CREDITS THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER WOULD BE A VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TASK, BUT HERE ANDREW PIXLEY HAS COMPILED A GUIDE TO HIS WORK ON SERIES OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THE TELEFANTASY FAN:

THE ADVENTURES OF WILLIAM TELL (ITC, 1958/59) Writer:
The General's Daughter (writer)

H.G.WELLS' THE INVISIBLE MAN (Season One: ITP/Official Films, 1958) Writer:
Shadow on the Screen (writer, from original story by Ralph Smart & Philip Levene),
The Mink Coat (writer, from original story by Leonore Coffee),
Jailbreak (writer),
Odds Against Death (writer, from original story by Stanley Mann)

H.G.WELLS' THE INVISIBLE MAN (Season Two: ITP/Official Films, 1959) Writer/soenario editor:
Point of Distruction (writer),
The Vanishing Evidence (writer),
The Prize (writer),
Flight Into Darkness (writer, from original story by William H. Altman),
The Gun Runners (writer),
The White Rabbit (writer),
Man in Power (writer),
Shadow Bomb (co-writer with Tony O'Grady (alias Brian Clemens),
The Big Plot (writer, from original story by Tony O'Grady - alias Brian Clemens - and Ralph Smart)

DANGER MAN (Season One: ITC, 1960/61) Writer/associate producer on first 12 episodes produced:
Time to Kill <US: Handcuffed> (co-writer with Brian Clemens,
The Girl In Pink Pyjamas (co-writer with Ralph Smart, from an original story by Brian Clemens),
The Journey Ends Halfway (writer),
Sabotage (co-writer with Michael Pertwee),
Deadline (original story, written by Jo Eisinger)

ONE STEP BEYOND <US: ALCOA PRESENTS...> (Season Three: Associated Redifusion/Collier Young, 1961/62) Writer:
The Tiger (writer)

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE (ABC/ATV, 1961/62) Writer:
The Prisoner (writer),
The English Dragon (writer),
Boy Jack (co-writer with Cedric Wells),
The Garrison (writer),
The Slaves of Spain (writer),
King of America (writer),
Beggars of the Sea (writer),
The Fountain of Youth (writer)

MAN OF THE WORLD (Season One: ITC, 1962) Writer/Script Editor:
Shadow of the Wall (writer)

MAN OF THE WORLD (Season Two: ITC, 1963) Writer/Script Editor:
The Bandit (co-writer with John Pudney)

THE SENTIMENTAL AGENT (ITC, 1963) Writer/Script Supervisor:
A Box Of Tricks (writer)

THE MAN IN ROOM 17 (Season One, Granada, 1965) Writer/Script Editor:
Up Against A Brick Wall (writer)

THE MAN IN ROOM 17 (Season Two, Granada, 1966) Writer:
First Steal Six Eggs (writer)

DOCTOR WHO (Season Three, BBC, 1965/66) Writer:
The Savages (4 episodes, writer),
The War Machines (4 episodes, writer)

DOCTOR WHO (Season Four, BBC, 1966/67) Writer:
The Macra Terror (4 episodes, writer)

THE CHAMPIONS (ITC/Filmakers, 1968/69) Writer:
Desert Journey (writer)

TULLY <pilot in ARMCHAIR CINEMA> (Euston Films/ABC, 1975) Writer

STAR MAIDENS (World-Wide Television/Portman Productions et al, 1976) Writer:
The Trial (writer),
Test For Love (writer),
The Perfect Couple (writer),
What Have They Done To The Rain? (writer),
Creatures of the Mind (writer).

GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHS

PAGE 17: (Top) Ian Stuart Black at ExoSpace, and (bottom) 'Star Maidens': Liz (Lisa Harrow) is introduced to Mendusan society by Octavia (Christine Kruger) in 'Test For Love'.

PAGE 18: (Top) Brady tries to explain to his niece (Deborah Watling) how he became invisible in the 'Secret Experiment' episode of "H.G.Wells' The Invisible Man" and (below) Patrick McGoohan in his 'Danger Man' guise.

PAGE 19: William Hartnell in an arresting situation in the 1966 'Doctor Who' tale 'The Savages' (c) Christopher Barry.

PAGE 20: (Top) A publicity shot from the following story, 'The War Machines' (c) Topham and (below) a selection of off-screen stills from 'The Macra Terror' (c) John Davies.